

Is securitization theory racist? Civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and antiblack thought in the Copenhagen School

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Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness and Antiracist thought in the Copenhagen School

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Abstract:	<p>This article provides the first excavation of the foundational role of racist thought in Securitization Theory's (ST) conceptual and methodological project. We demonstrate that Copenhagen School ST is structured not only by Eurocentrism, but also civilizationism, methodological Whiteness, and antiracist racism. Classic ST begins with a theory of 'normal politics' as reasoned, civilized dialogue and securitization as a potential regression into a racially coded uncivilized 'state of nature'. It justifies this through a civilizationist history of the world that privileges Europe as the apex of civilized 'desecuritization', sanitizing its violent (settler) colonial projects, and the racial violence of normal liberal politics. It then constructs a methodologically White framework that uses speech act theory to locate 'progress' towards normal politics and the curbing of securitization in Europe. This methodological Whiteness produces normative Whiteness, that is, the theory does not just describe desecuritization as European progress, it normatively asserts that becoming or remaining like Europe is a moral imperative. Using ostensibly neutral terms, ST prioritizes order over justice, positioning the ST theorist as the defender of (White) 'civilized politics' against (racialized) 'primal anarchy'. Antiracism is a crucial building block in ST's conceptual edifice dividing security from politics: ST finds 'primal anarchy' especially in 'Africa', casting it as irrationally over-securitized, making it a foil to 'civilized politics'. We conclude by discussing whether other versions of ST emulate or dispense with the racism of classic ST, and a discussion of whether the theory, or even just the concept of securitization, can be recuperated.</p>

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Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness and Antiblack thought in the Copenhagen School

Securitization Theory (ST) has unquestionably made a significant impact. Its founding texts are amongst the most widely cited within IR scholarship (cf. Wæver et al. 1993; Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998; Buzan and Wæver 2003), spawning active research programs and new ‘generations’ of ST thought. The concept of securitization has travelled to disciplines beyond IR, and even entered public discourse. What is so appealing about this theory? Perhaps the most tempting aspect of ST is its methodological rigor. It provides a clear set of steps and standards for identifying how referent objects (e.g. migration, health, cyber space) become security problems, and deciding whether they should indeed be ‘securitized’. Its methodology is a ready-made tool that can be applied to all sorts of empirical areas. However, students and scholars of security ought to resist this temptation of a ready-made approach and inquire more deeply into ST’s core theoretical assumptions and methodology.

This article argues that racist thought is fundamental and integral to classic ST’s conceptual and methodological project. While other scholarship has worked either to incorporate analysis of race into ST (Ibrahim 2005; Amin-Khan 2012; Mofette and Vadassaria 2016), or to overcome ST’s Eurocentrism (Wilkinson 2007; Bilgin 2010; Bilgin 2011), this article offers something different. It is the first to excavate the foundations of ST in racist thought, and the results this has in the theory’s application. We demonstrate that classic ST is fundamentally and inextricably structured not only by Eurocentrism, but also civilizationism, methodological Whiteness, and antiblack racism.

What does it mean to excavate the racist foundations of a theory? That we use the ‘r-word’ and White supremacy as categories of analysis is sure to raise eyebrows. Even sympathetic readers might wonder if the problem we identify is more appropriately characterized as *Eurocentrism*. The critique of the Eurocentric character of much Western scholarship and cultural production has made significant inroads across academic disciplines, including in IR (Hobson 2012; Sabaratnam 2013). Our analysis is inspired by this research and extends some of its insights. Yet there is more to be said. Black studies and decolonial scholarship have demonstrated that much of orthodox and critical Western social and political thought is predicated upon epistemological and ontological premises that are not simply Eurocentric but *racist*, specifically White supremacist. In IR, recent debates have addressed the question of whether postcolonial IR should proceed solely through an analytic of Eurocentrism or whether we need to more specifically address racism and White supremacy (Sajed 2016; Hozic 2016; Gruffydd Jones 2016; Rutazibwa 2016). Sajed suggests that the term ‘Eurocentric’ potentially neutralizes the foundational and continuing racism of the discipline (Sajed 2016, 168). Rutazibwa asks, “what existing power structure does this reluctance [to name racism and White supremacy] serve?” (Rutazibwa 2016, 192).

Echoing these concerns, we ask: What is at stake in the reluctance to name racism and White power in (international) political analyses? Racism is a fundamental system of power that has profoundly shaped the world for the past several hundred years. Moreover, as is now well established, IR emerged to provide intellectual support for the imperial and (settler) colonial ambitions of Western states (Vitalis 2000; Vitalis 2015; Krishna 2001; Agathangelou and Ling 2004a). Drawing on Black Studies, Indigenous Studies and decolonial scholarship, we illustrate the racist and White supremacist modes of thought that underpin classic ST by deploying three concepts beyond Eurocentrism: civilizationism, methodological Whiteness, and antiblack racism.

The argument presented here is not a personal indictment of any particular author. Contrary to common sense notions that reduce racism to interpersonal prejudices of openly bigoted individuals, racism and White supremacy are *systems of power* (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Epistemic racism is intrinsic to Western knowledge structures, and not merely a failure of individual scholarship (Bhambra 2013; Grosfoguel 2003). Just as the ongoing racialized distribution of life chances across liberal societies is not simply the effect of intentionally racist individuals, racialized knowledge production is not simply the result of bad or flawed individual theorists. Colonial and racist assumptions about racial and civilizational difference animate the core political categories and theoretical frameworks of Western social and political thought. As we demonstrate, this is also true of classic ST.

We begin by acknowledging that discussions of racism or colonialism are not entirely absent in classic ST. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* briefly discusses the racial politics of US domestic societal security (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 130). In one of ST's original formulations, Wæver discusses neo-Nazi attacks on asylum seekers and racist justifications for the securitization of migration (Wæver 1995, 70; see also Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 42, 44–45). Colonialism is sometimes referenced (cf. Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 61, 63, 98, 129; Buzan and Wæver 2003, 14–18, 221), and White supremacy is mentioned as a potential “macrosecuritization” (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 263). Our argument is not that race is absent in ST, but that racist political thought is integral to it, even when (rarely) discussing race or colonialism.

The article proceeds in four sections. Section one reviews the ST framework and notable criticisms of it. Section two focuses on the conceptual apparatus of ST, showing how its conceptualization of ‘politics’ and ‘security’ is founded in civilizationist thought. Section three focuses on ST's methodology, highlighting its methodological Whiteness. Section four illustrates the seriousness of these problems through a case study, demonstrating antiblack racism in classic ST's accounts of ‘Africa’.

Throughout, we focus on classic articulations of ST associated with the Copenhagen School. Classic ST is very much an ongoing intellectual project that continues to be assertively defended by its founders (Buzan and Wæver 1997; Wæver 2011; Wæver 2015) and its basic precepts are in need of questioning in new ways. However, we are not unaware of divergences in ‘second generation’ and other iterations of ST. We therefore conclude with some thoughts about whether other versions of ST emulate or dispense with the

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racism of classic ST, and a discussion of whether the theory, or even just the concept of securitization, can be salvaged.

1. Securitization Theory and its Critics

ST was forged in the post-Cold War period as a compromise between traditional (Neo-)Realist military security analysis and Aberystwyth School scholarship which advocated widening the definition of security. ST aims to recuperate Realism’s definition of security: survival in the face of an existential threat (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 1), whilst agreeing with the Aberystwyth School that security analysis should not focus solely on military state security.

Drawing on JL Austin’s speech act theory, ST proposes a social constructivist methodology. Securitization is defined as occurring not only when ‘security’ is uttered, but during any invocation of existential threat to a referent object (including, but not only, states). The securitizing actor must have some authority, but their audience must also accept, through consent or coercion (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 25), their claim. ST thus views securitizations as illocutionary and intersubjective.

ST centrally distinguishes between politics and security, or politicization and securitization. Through securitization an issue is intersubjectively deemed an existential threat. This justifies breaking ‘normal’ political rules (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 5), a potentially *dangerous* slip from the norm to the exception. Wæver further draws attention to the (presumptively desirable) possibility of desecuritization: de-escalation back to ‘normal politics’ (Wæver 1995; Aradau 2004). This is ST’s great strength: it provides a methodology for questioning how security threats are constructed, and how this might be reversed.

Several decades after its formulation, ST has many variants (cf. Balzacq 2011). These are too numerous to do justice to here. Instead, we focus on four key critiques of classic ST and demonstrate that they sometimes replicate, and at other times do not go far enough in challenging the racist political thought fundamental to ST’s concepts and methodology.

First, Feminist scholars of ST have questioned whether the theory can account for gender relations (Hansen 2000; Hoogensen and Rottem 2004; H. Hudson 2005; N. F. Hudson 2009; Heck and Schlag 2013; Kearns 2017). Much of this research is inspired by Hansen’s (2000) widely cited article, which argues that classic ST’s limitations regarding gender are methodological: speech act theory cannot account for the gendered power dynamics that underpin situations when speech is not possible. Though Hansen illustrates these methodological shortcomings through the fable of the Little Mermaid, wittily locating the analysis in Copenhagen, for empirical evidence the article abruptly travels to Pakistan and the case study of ‘honour killings’. There, Hansen finds “raped Muslim women” (Hansen 2000, 299) who are deemed to be ‘silent’. This Orientalist imaginary constructs a racial opposition: White Western women, who have achieved legitimacy as vocal political actors, versus ‘silent’ subaltern Pakistani ‘raped Muslim women’ (Abu-Lughod 2002; on ST see Bertrand 2018). This elides gendered insecurity in places like Denmark, where feminism itself is deployed in discourses of White supremacism, and ‘gender equality’ is figured as a mark of civilization

threatened, for instance, by Muslimified (Richter-Montpetit 2014, 45) immigrants. So, in core Feminist ST texts, we find that Eurocentric and racist thought is re-affirmed rather than challenged.

Second, ST's Eurocentrism has been challenged by scholarship that asks whether applying ST to the non-West challenges or modifies the theory (Wilkinson 2007; Bilgin 2010; Bilgin 2011), a question also asked by some of ST's original proponents (cf. Greenwood and Wæver 2013). However, ST has never ignored the 'non-West'. As we will show, its concepts and methodology draw heavily on racist accounts of spaces outside Europe that reify a stark division between 'West' and 'non-West' without examining colonial relationalities. Analysis of ST's Eurocentrism that proceeds without an analysis of racism and ongoing (legacies of) colonialism and imperialism is inadequate. Critics of ST's Eurocentrism assert that we cannot assume a (functioning, democratic) European state in non-West spaces, but ignore the (settler) colonial underpinnings of the state system and border cartographies. Seeing the issue solely as the analytical exclusion of the 'non-West,' they decry 'Eurocentrism' while retaining racist political thought. We adopt a more robust analysis (cf. Sabaratnam 2013) that views Eurocentrism as involving the ideas that: (1) 'Europe' or 'the West' is ontologically distinctive; (2) European development was endogenous; and (3) European cultural and political achievements were subsequently diffused across the world. Additionally, we deploy concepts beyond Eurocentrism (civilizationism, methodological Whiteness, and antiblack racism) to grapple with the role of racist political thought in the basic concepts and methodology of ST.

Third, an emerging body of scholarship has inquired into how ST can better account for colonialism (Bertrand 2018) and racism (Ibrahim 2005; Amin-Khan 2012; Mofette and Vadassaria 2016). Such scholarship moves significantly beyond a thin interpretation of Eurocentrism. Most often, such arguments highlight that securitizing discourses deploy racialized threat imaginaries. For example, several authors have pointed out that racism is central to the securitization of migration (Ibrahim 2005; Mofette & Vandasaria 2016), thereby 'adding' race to securitization analysis. While this work is valuable for highlighting racist securitizations, it ultimately just *adds* race to ST, without inquiring more deeply into ST's fundamental reliance on racist political thought.

Fourth, Foucauldian Security Studies (FSS) have offered convincing criticism of ST's reliance on a norm/exception distinction derived from the German philosopher, and "Crown Jurist of the Third Reich" (Frye 1966), Carl Schmitt (Huysmans 2008; Neal 2006; 2009). For ST, 'normal politics' is the norm, and security/securitizations are the exception, conceptually separating "security and the process of securitization from that which is merely political" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 5). FSS scholars criticize this formulation for eliding the everyday bureaucratic construction of security (Bigo 2002; McDonald 2008); limiting securitization to a singular threat-defense logic (Neal 2009); and only considering forms of politics found in the nation-state, despite claiming to challenge state-centrism (Huysmans 2006; Neal 2006).

In the next section, we build on these critiques, but open a new line of inquiry, arguing that ST's norm/exception distinction harnesses a racist, specifically civilizationist political imaginary, in which normal

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politics is the achievement of civilization, and ‘securitization’ threatens a potential backslide into barbarous ‘primal anarchy’. As a result, ST’s binary of normal politics versus exceptional security obscures the racial violence of ‘normal’ liberal politics.

2. Civilizationism in ST’s Conceptual Apparatus

In this section we describe how civilizationist thought underpins ST’s concepts of politics and security. Civilizationism is a term used to describe racist (theoretical) perspectives that contain three assumptions: 1. Civilizations can, and ought to, advance, and some (Western) civilizations are more ‘advanced’; 2. Civilizational progress is not only technological and material, but political and moral; 3. The ‘underdevelopment’ of certain civilizations represents a problem for, or threat to, developed ones. Drawing on a broad canon of civilizationist political philosophy, canonical ST texts develop a narrative of world-historical progress in which civilizational advancement beyond the violence of ‘primal anarchy’ involves curtailing securitization through the instantiation of civilized ‘normal politics’.

Classic ST frequently and favorably cites Samuel Huntington’s racist (Said 2001) clash of civilizations thesis (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 36, 53, 112, 125). Also repeatedly affirmatively referenced (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 47,54, 69-70, 112, 127; Buzan and Wæver 2003, 221, 252) is Robert Kaplan, infamous for his theory of “the coming anarchy”, his warnings of the danger of “tribalism”, his neo-Malthusian arguments about “overpopulation” (but only in the Global South) (Kaplan 1994; Kaplan 2000) and his defense of “tempered imperialism” (Kaplan 2014). Social theorists such as Durkheim who built his theory of society on racist and civilizationist anthropological distinctions between civilized men versus savages (Elias and Feagin 2016) also feature (Wæver 1995, 67).

Perhaps more fundamentally, ST draws on social contract thinkers such as Hobbes (cf. Wæver 1995, 54; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 69, 209) for their ‘state of nature’ concept (Wæver 2011, 121). Mills (1997) has convincingly argued that racism is integral, not incidental, to social contract theory¹, which typically casts the social contract as an achievement of Western civilization, and locates the contrasting ‘state of nature’ in African ‘tribes’ or Indigenous ‘savages’ (Mills 1997, 13). ST extends social contract theory to cast ‘normal politics’ (and the curbing of securitization) as an achievement of civilization. ‘Primal anarchy’ and the ‘state of nature’ act as the foils to this ‘normal politics’ in a teleological hierarchy of civilizational advancement from securitization towards politicization (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 53, 69).

Following Hobbes, ST locates this supposed progress in the West, particularly Europe:

It perhaps begins with the construction of the Hobbesian state in the eighteenth century. The creation of the Leviathan was aimed at opening a sphere of public economic and political life, and

¹ For a critique of the racial politics of Realist and Liberal uses of social contract theory, see (Sampson 2002; Henderson 2015).

this could not be done without pushing the use of force back into a contained space controlled by the state. Under the Leviathan, citizens could not draw swords over economic grievances or political disagreements, which were to be handled by the rule of law and the market. The logic of existential threat and the right to use force... were reserved to the state and thus were largely *desecuritized* among the citizens (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 209, emphasis added)

The social contract, for ST, is a kind of (18th century, White, European, liberal) feat of desecuritization, both within nation states and amongst them, since “Desecuritization is possible even in the presence of separate military capabilities” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 51).² However, ST does not merely replicate social contract theory and civilizationist thought. It develops it. By introducing a constructivist methodology, ST places politicization (the instantiation of ‘normal politics’ or social contracts) and *minimizing securitization* as integral to civilizational progress.

However, ST is an eclectic theory, drawing on a variety of distinctive if not oppositional theorists. In addition to thinkers easily identified as civilizationist, it also draws on apparently more critical theorists, including Arendt. Above, we discussed Foucauldian critiques that describe ST’s conceptualization of security as the exception to politics as Schmittian. Wæver has recently complained that these critics have misunderstood: “...it is wrong to claim... that securitization theory involves a ‘Schmittian’ concept of politics – the theory has a Schmittian concept of security and an Arendtian concept of politics” (Wæver 2011, 470), further clarifying that:

The concept of *security* is Schmittian, because it defines security in terms of exception, emergency, and a decision (although not by a singular will, but among people in a political situation). This does not in itself make securitization theory’s concept of *politics* Schmittian, because the place of security in the theory is as an anti-politics or the politically constituted limit to politics. This general politics is inspired by Hannah Arendt (Wæver 2011, 478)

Elsewhere, Wæver summarizes Arendt’s concept of politics: “politics takes place among people, in-between us, because power only emerges when people act together, it basically consists of action directed to and dependent on the reaction of others, not doing things directly” (Wæver 2015, 122). Here, he adverts to Arendt’s distinction between power (Macht) and violence (Gewalt), which ST mirrors by dividing politicization from securitization.

Arendt drew on racist German anthropology that distinguished between (uncivilized) “nature people” (Naturvölker) and (civilized) “cultured people” (Kulturvölker) (Klausen 2010; Owens 2017) to divide the world into communities with history, language and political institutions, and those without (Klausen 2010, 396). She cast the former as (morally and politically) superior and warned that the latter’s ‘primitivism’ posed a threat to political freedom and democracy. When ST adopts Arendt’s concept of politics, it does not dispense with her civilizationism, but replicates and develops it by conceptualizing ‘normal politics’ as the

² See Henderson’s (2009) critique of this logic in Democratic Peace Theory.

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achievement of civilized people capable of resisting excessive violence (securitization) through reasoned dialogue (politicization).

ST also replicates Arendt’s evacuation of violence from politics. Arendt built her idea of Macht (power) on an idealized vision of the Athenian *polis*, ignoring the ‘raw materials’ of ancient Athenian democracy – slave labor and women’s unpaid reproductive labor (James 2003, 249f). She similarly idealized the American republic (Gines 2014; James 2003; Johnson 2009; Owens 2017). Although in her famous ‘boomerang thesis’ Arendt (1979) located the origins of Nazism in European racism and colonialism, she asserted that the US had never been guilty of imperialism or Indigenous genocide (cf. James 2003; Johnson 2009). Though she spoke out against Nazi White supremacy in Europe, she insisted US racism was merely a *social* phenomenon, not a *political* structure (James 2003, 253; Johnson 2009) even though Nazi policies were explicitly inspired by US settler colonial genocide, the reservation system and Jim Crow segregation (Cesaire 1950; Fanon 1967; James 2003; Whitman 2017). In praising ancient Athens and contemporary America, Arendt actively minimized the imperial, racialized and gendered violence structuring these ‘civilized’ democracies (Norton 1995; Allen 2001; James 2003; Johnson 2009; Gines 2009; 2014).

ST similarly occludes the racial violence of normal (liberal) politics. This is not just a conceptual problem: it results in major empirical oversights. For example, though it contains the word ‘security’, ST places social security outside of its frame of analysis, as part of peaceful domestic ‘normal politics’: “Although it shares some qualities with ‘social security,’ or security as applied to various civilian guard or police functions, international security has its own distinctive, more extreme meaning. Unlike social security, which has strong links to matters of entitlement and social justice, international security is more firmly rooted in the traditions of power politics” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 21). ST overlooks the power politics of social security, and cannot see how Western welfare state social security systems support White (settler) heteropatriarchal forms of life, such as the nuclear family (Cohen 1997; Duggan 2003; Kandaswamy 2008; Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013) and disproportionately target racialized, Indigenous, and poor communities for direct and violent interventions such as the removal of children from families through: enslavement, the residential schools that formed part of the genocide of Indigenous people, child welfare systems, migrant detention and removal, and so on. Closer to Copenhagen: Denmark now uses socialized daycare as a means for removing and assimilating Muslim children (Salem 2018). Social and national security are imbricated: for example, current Islamophobic counter-terrorism programs often use social and health services to identify suspected ‘terrorists’ (Kundnani 2014; Qureshi 2015; Qurashi 2018). Social security only entails ‘entitlement and social justice’ for those privileged by Whiteness, heterosexuality, citizenship and/or class status. ST’s civilizationist idealization of ‘normal politics’ occludes these dynamics.

More strikingly still, Copenhagen School theorists view policing as a positive force: “In the West, the police are normally an institutionalized part of society that ensures continuous functioning” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 54). They praise the pacification role of the modern state (Greenwood and Wæver 2013, 489) and ignore the long-standing use of police in defending class and racial inequality and (hetero)sexual

mores (James 2000; Kelley 2000; Davis 2003; Sexton 2007; Amar 2013; Browne 2015; Singh 2016), and violently occupying Indigenous land (Fanon 1963; Nettelbeck and Smandych 2010; Byrd 2011; Dhillon 2015; Razack 2015; Bell and Schreiner 2018). ST also repeatedly refers to the US War on Drugs as a “niche securitization” (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 327–31; Buzan and Wæver 2009, 265). This minimizes the transnational history of antiblack violence perpetrated by the US state leading into the mass incarceration of Black and Latinx people (James 2000; Davis 2003; Rodriguez 2006) and ignores American covert and counterinsurgency action globally, especially in Latin America. Policing ensures ‘good’ order for those privileged by Whiteness, property ownership, gender norms or settler status. The constitutive role of policing and law in the racial, (settler) colonial, sexual and class violence of ‘normal politics’ is occluded as a direct result of ST’s reliance on civilizationist oppositions between politics versus security, and politicization versus securitization.

Classic ST is civilizationist in that it believes that there are more or less politically and morally developed civilizations, yet the problem runs even deeper than this. Worse, it also avers that ‘underdeveloped’ civilizations represent a threat to supposedly more advanced ones. This becomes especially clear when examining ST’s ideas about ‘state failure’. ST claims that in ‘developed’ states (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 28) a civilized political sphere generally fends off securitization, except when “securitization is unavoidable, as when states are faced with an implacable or barbarian aggressor” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 29). By contrast, in ‘failed’ or ‘weak’ states securitization runs amok: “In well-developed states, armed forces and intelligence services are carefully separated from normal political life, and their use is subject to elaborate procedures of authorization. Where such separation is not in place, as in many weak states... much of normal politics is pushed into the security realm” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 28). This excessive securitization, in turn, leads to primal (or ‘Hobbesian’ or ‘Kaplansque’) anarchy wherein the state “fails to take root or spirals into disintegration. This situation can lead to prolonged periods of *primal anarchy*, as is currently the case in Afghanistan and various parts of Africa, in which the state is only a shadow and reality is one of rival warlords and gangs” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 50, emphasis added; for analysis of the colonial preoccupation with Afghan ‘tribes’ see Manchanda 2018).

Discourses of state failure are “irredeemably rooted in an imperial and racialized imagination” (Gruffydd Jones 2014, 65; see also Grovogui 2001; Wai 2012a; Wai 2012b; Shilliam 2013). While they may avoid overt reference to race, they operate within a lineage of racial discourse which emerged to justify colonialism, and continuing trusteeship. This racial hierarchy is fully represented in ST’s list of weak and failing states: Nigeria under Abacha, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Liberia, and “various parts of Africa”, the USSR under Stalin, Bosnia, Colombia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and so on (cf. Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 28, 50, 69, 146). This is a racial discourse: ‘primal anarchy’ is primarily located in ‘brown’ (‘Afghanistan’) and ‘black’ (‘parts of Africa’) regions.

That Copenhagen School theorists sometimes seem to be aware of how this division falls does not lead them to question it. On the contrary, they warn against Western-centrism, but only in order to emphasize that it is

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in the West that ‘normal’ civilized politics exists: “if domestic and international were fixed, there would be a risk of generating a cozy Western view of politics: Domestic politics is normal and without security, whereas the extreme is relegated to the international space. In other parts of the world, domestic is not cozy” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 47, note 7). For ST, primal anarchy exists, not only in the international realm, but also in non-Western ‘other parts of the world’, where a failure of normal politics leads to “‘tribalist’ forms of association” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 69).

In doing so, ST refuses to seriously consider the role of modern colonialism and ongoing imperial warfare in ‘failed states’. Such consideration might reveal the significance of colonial extraction of resources and labor, colonial policies of divide and rule, colonial imposition of state borders, and military and covert intervention by Western powers, such as the US state’s arming and training of Mujahedeen forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Instead, ST frames ‘failed states’ as evidence of a primal state of nature.

The idea that there has been (White) civilizational progress away from (racialized) primal anarchy is omnipresent in ST. Civilizationism is not just a collateral, detachable, part of ST’s imaginary, or a sadly unattended-to implication of its Kaplanesque view of anarchy or its Arendtian model of politics. ST’s vision of the world relies on a supposedly fundamental opposition between politicization and securitization. Ungrounded in the racist and civilizationist narrative that ‘normal politics’ emerged from ‘primal anarchy’, this opposition would look as arbitrary as it in fact is.

3. Methodological and Normative Whiteness in Securitization Theory

We have established that ST is founded in a civilizationist conceptualization of politics and security which occludes racial and colonial violence. We now demonstrate that on the basis of these assumptions, ST develops a methodologically and normatively White theory.

As post-colonial, critical race and feminist scholarship argues, methodology involves making choices about whose perspectives or histories we (de)value. Bhabra (2017, np) defines methodological Whiteness as “a way of reflecting on the world that fails to acknowledge the role played by race in the very structuring of that world, and of the ways in which knowledge is constructed and legitimated within it. It fails to recognize the dominance of ‘Whiteness’ as anything other than the standard state of affairs and treats a limited perspective – that deriving from White experience – as a universal perspective”. Operating in supposedly neutral and universal terms, methodological Whiteness naturalizes the racial status quo, eliding the crucial role of racism in our political systems or intellectual traditions. Bertrand (2018) has critiqued ST’s methodology for setting up a colonial relation wherein subalterns cannot speak, and securitization theorists are positioned as speaking for them. Our critique is somewhat different: we argue that since ST aspires to describe not just ‘what is’, but ‘what should be’, its methodological Whiteness also becomes normative Whiteness. To illustrate this argument, we evaluate ST’s incorporation of speech act theory, and ask how it interfaces with its civilizationist conceptualizations of politics and security.

ST bases its methodology in JL Austin's notion of illocutionary speech acts: forms of speech having some element of force, such as making a promise or giving a warning. Combining this with an Arendtian concept of politics seems intuitive: Arendt defined politics as action through communication, and Austin provides a method for analyzing communication as action. Notably, this methodology enacts a normative stance, being designed to "protect" Arendtian normal politics:

Securitization theory was built from the start on speech act theory, because it is an operational method that can be designed to protect politics in Arendt's sense. Put in short form, the political conception of securitization theory is *inspired by Arendt, implemented through speech act theory* (Wæver 2015, 122, emphasis in the original)

As we have seen, by defining violence as outside politics Arendt failed to acknowledge that, by virtue of gender and racialization, some people are produced as the 'raw materials' of others' political freedom. When ST claims that the purpose of its method is to protect Arendtian 'normal politics', it implicitly undertakes to defend civilization and the status quo of a violent international racial order.

To begin, we can observe that ST does not challenge the ways in which structures of speech acts (like law, civil hierarchy, or international treaties) are and have been central to enforcing a colonial system of global inequality. On the contrary ST is structured, through its apparent neutrality, to supplement and reinforce those structures:

Our relative objectivism on social relations has the drawback of contributing to the reproduction of things as they are, of contributing to the taking for granted that CSS [Critical Security Studies] wants to upset. The advantage is—totally in line with classical security studies—to help in managing relations among units (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 206)

This asserts ST's methodological and normative investment in maintaining the status quo. While acknowledging this as a 'drawback', the authors claim it is worth the price, because 'managing relations among units' – maintaining order – is a higher priority than justice.

And how is order to be maintained? By preventing civilized 'normal politics' from 'regressing' into a 'state of nature':

Austin gives us insights into the capacity of mankind [sic] for creating shared environments through language... Herein lies *the power of human civilization, as opposed to the 'state of nature'*; the power which alone makes it possible, on occasion, for someone weak and without weapons to be listened to and even obeyed, the power which makes it possible to conceive and pursue things such as social equality or solidarity and equal opportunities for genders, *all of which would not be conceivable in a 'state of nature' ethology*. To acknowledge in theory and investigate such power is at the same time to foster and defend it against the *regression into forms of social life based on brute force and coercion* (Wæver 2015, 121, emphasis added)

Although this passage avoids overt mention of race, a racial imaginary is fully operative here. Its argument is that through the use of language to form social contracts, civilized people lift themselves above the savage 'state of nature' and create a public political sphere. This superiority is evidenced by the capacity for (Western, liberal) discourses like 'equal opportunities for genders' (here, ST echoes imperial feminism's

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racist claim that gender equality is most advanced in the West and should be exported, especially to ‘Muslim’ societies).

However, while traditional Hobbesian social contract theory views the social contract in quasi-legal terms as happening once for all in the past, ST redefines it as continuously intersubjectively produced through speech acts, and therefore constantly in need of reproduction. White Western superiority is therefore precarious: it must be protected from (excessive) securitization which risks a ‘regression’ to a lower level of civilization or a fully uncivilized ‘state of nature’.

This passage does not merely retell a classic civilizationist narrative in newer philosophical language. *It operationalizes this narrative, making its assumptions into a method.* If the ability to do things with words and not force distinguishes civilized man, it argues, then to analyze ‘how to do things with words’ via Austin’s method must be *in itself* to step to the defense of civilized normal politics. ST offers a methodological procedure by which the scholar can observe that a speech act meets the criteria for ‘securitization’ and make normative statements about whether it should be heeded. For ST, when we deploy this methodology, we inherently proceed in a civilized manner and so contribute to and protect illocutionary, Arendtian politics.

The normative goal of ST is to protect ‘normal politics’ though civilized illocutionary action in favor of desecuritization, where desecuritization is constantly understood as synonymous with “progress attached to the development of Western international society”:

Progress as desecuritization [has been] inherent in the liberals’ project since the nineteenth century... This project has been taken the *furthest* in the “zone of peace” that now characterizes Western international society... With the demise of the Communist counterproject and the closed states and societies associated with it, the prospect exists for a more widespread dissolving of borders, desecuritizing most kinds of political, social, and economic interaction. This development is the *most advanced* within the EU, but it is also inherent in the shift from modern to postmodern states and from more closed to more open political constructions that is going on in many parts of the world (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 209, emphasis added)

To describe the 19th Century, golden age of European imperialism, as a period of Western liberal progress is to dramatically misapprehend the historical record (cf. Barkawi and Laffey 1999; Grovogui 2001; Krishna 2001). To equate the growth of Western imperialist hegemony with ‘desecuritization’ is even worse. It is to not only retroactively sanitize White supremacist imperialist history, but to further insist that it *ought* to continue. In this sort of normative claim, ST’s racism is most operative, moving from a White methodology that describes the world from “a limited perspective – that deriving from White experience” (Bhambra 2017, np), to a normatively White prescription for how the world ought to be.

To illustrate the empirical consequences of this methodological and normative Whiteness, consider how ST refuses to distinguish between White nationalist and racial justice movements:

The radical white categorizations often line up with the attempts of the avowed progressives of the movements of minorities, multiculturalism, and political correctness to produce a general U.S.

trend toward a redefinition of cultural and societal categories in terms of distinct racial and gender groups. The one side wants these groups recognized to ensure affirmative action in favor of the disfavored; the other side wants to use these categories to picture minorities as the threat to them and thereby to the whole... (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 130)

The above passage is not a mistake. Similar lines of thought are articulated elsewhere, for instance in relation to the threat of “radical feminism” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 54). ST frames racial justice and White nationalist movements as equivalent: both potentially securitize cultural and racial categories. This framing is a result of ST’s methodological Whiteness, its inability to ask questions about racialized, gendered and (settler) colonial orders. It is also a normative stance. ST aims to use speech act theory to defend normal politics from (excessive) securitization, *including by racial justice movements*. Racial justice, by extension, becomes a danger, threatening regression into a (racially coded) lower level of civilization, or worse, primal anarchy.

To summarize: classic ST is fundamentally and avowedly conservative, seeking to excuse and reinforce a White liberal status quo. ST begins with a theory of ‘normal politics’ as reasoned, civilized dialogue and securitization as a potential regression into an uncivilized ‘state of nature’. It justifies this through a civilizationist history of the world that privileges Europe as the apex of civilization and ‘desecuritization’, ignoring Europe’s violent colonial projects. It then constructs a methodologically White theory that mostly avoids mentioning race even as it locates ‘progress’ towards normal politics and the limitation of securitization in Europe. This methodological Whiteness produces normative Whiteness, that is, the theory does not just describe desecuritization as European progress, it normatively asserts that becoming or remaining like Europe is a moral imperative. Through an analysis of classic ST’s representations of Africa the following section shows how these intellectual commitments issue in clear antiblack racism.

4. Putting Theory into Practice: Antiblack Racism in ST writings on Africa

Antiblackness is a term describing the *specificity* of racism against people of African descent in the post-Columbus world. Chattel slavery turned people from the African continent into commodities to be traded and accumulated and thereby placed them “as the bottom marker” of “a projected universally human scale of being” (Wynter 2003, 308; cf. Fanon 1967; Hartman 1997; Spillers 1987). In this imaginary, Blackness and Black people figured as enslaveable *things*: the foil against which notions of what it means to be human (and thus a political subject) were invented. Antiblack racism is also complexly entangled with Western gender and sexual formations (Fanon 1967; Spillers 1987; Hartman 1997): Black women’s bodies and their alleged sexual difference were cast as proof of African primitivism.³

³ A notorious example is the treatment of Saartjie Baartman. For years, the Khoikhoi woman was paraded across Europe as a freak show. Antiblack discourses surrounding the alleged pathologies of her body centered on the size of her buttocks and genitalia (‘the Hottentot apron’) (McClintock 1995, 42).

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Significant here are questions of temporality. For Victorians, Africa was “a fetish-land, inhabited by cannibals, dervishes and witch doctors, abandoned in prehistory” (McClintock 1995, 41). Tropes of ‘the Dark Continent’ as “inhabiting not simply a different geographical space but a different temporal zone” (McClintock 1995, 40) stubbornly persist, including in much IR theory, which casts Africa “as a metaphor for a number of evils: failed states, AIDS, poverty, corruption...” (Grovogui 2001, 426). Such representations of Africa are not incidental in traditional IR theory. They are intrinsic to it. This is because ‘Africa’ serves as a *foil* (Mills 1997, 13) to ‘Europe’ and ‘the West’, the ultimate counterpart to not just *Western* but *human* development (Mudibe 1988; Wai 2012a). In much IR scholarship Blackness continues to signify ultimate (moral, sexual and political) primitivism, an inherent propensity to (sexual and political) violence, and sexual excess and danger.

Does ST overcome, replicate, or deepen antiblack though on ‘Africa’? Certainly, ST sees a tendency towards primal anarchy and the ‘state of nature’ in many non-Western parts of the world (the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central, South and East Asia, the Middle East and South America), but ‘Africa’ is particularly maligned. Often, classic ST treats the entire continent as a single entity, a space where normal politics is weak and oversecritized, the state or social contract fails (or was never established) and ‘man’ reverts to (or has never left) the state of nature. “*Africa is a pessimist’s paradise, a place where the Hobbesian hypothesis that in the absence of a political Leviathan life for individuals will be nasty, brutish, and short seems to be widely manifest in everyday life*” (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 219). In passages like this, ST represents ‘Africa’ as the ultimate space of ‘primal anarchy’ and securitization, and thus as a counterpoint against which (European) ‘normal politics’ and desecritization are defined.

Elsewhere, however, it adds some complexity by seeing Africa in terms of multiple temporalities, being both ‘premodern’, having elements of the ‘modern’, and threatening a ‘back to the future’ scenario. For instance, in contrast to its sweeping history of Europe over millennia (containing little mention of colonialism), a book like *Regions and Powers* (Buzan and Wæver 2003) offers a history of Africa that covers only official decolonization and the post-Cold War era: a matter of mere decades. Completely missing is any historical account of how colonialism and enslavement shaped not only African, but also European security relations (Barkawi and Laffey 1999; Barkawi 2006; Krishna 2001; Agathangelou and Ling 2004b), and even the idea of Europe itself (Said 1979; Mudimbe 1988). Conversely, another canonical ST text asserts that: “In the contemporary international system, some *prestate* referent objects are still active. The remnants of *tribal barbarians still exist* in parts of Central Asia and Africa. Some hint of how these tribes *worked* as referent objects for military security can be gleaned from contemporary civil wars in Afghanistan and Somalia” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 53, emphasis added). The past-tense “worked” here implies that we can learn about pre-modern times (in Europe) by looking at present-day Afghanistan or Somalia, whose backwards ‘tribal barbarian’ populations constitute a *prestate* referent. These two temporalities come together in the statement that “In Africa, the main societal referent objects are a mix of premodern—the

extended family, village, clan, and tribe—and modern, the ‘state-nation’” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 126).

ST, then, sees Africa as temporally anomalous – that is, both pre-modern and modern – because it manifests both a postcolonial present, and a potential degeneration to a precolonial/premodern past, as when Buzan and Wæver, drawing from other authors, including Kaplan, speculate that:

the period of colonization and decolonization might, in the long view, appear as something of an interlude, a period with its own distinctive characteristics, rather than a point of permanent transformation from premodern to modern. If back-to-the-future pessimism is right, then what we are looking at now is some phase in the terminal collapse of the Westphalian experiment in Africa (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 221)

This passage outlines a ‘back to the future’ scenario in which Africa returns to its default state of precolonial, tribal, anarchic statelessness. Here, as elsewhere, ST does not entirely ignore histories of colonization: it admits that colonialism had an impact on Africa, but understands this impact not as a violent extraction of resources and labor and a violent transformation of people into chattel, but as an ‘experiment’ aimed at bringing the European Westphalian state to ‘premodern’ barbarians (cf. Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 53, 126; Buzan and Wæver 2003, 221). Colonial and ongoing post-colonial and settler colonial exploitation does not feature in this analysis, and decolonization appears, not as a project of liberation, but as a potential backslide into premodern primal anarchy (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 345). For ST, histories of colonialism look less like violent ongoing exploitation than a missed opportunity for Africa to become more modern, desecuritized, and European.

Why is ‘Africa’ missing this opportunity? ST’s methodological Whiteness leads it to assert, without substantiation, that the cause of this backsliding must be not the ongoing extractive violence of liberal powers, but the failure of African people and states to effectively ‘desecuritize’:

Because political violence has been such an endemic feature of the African landscape, and because the crisis of the African state is so central to the pervasive insecurity on the continent, we will take the existence of systematic political violence to indicate the presence of a dominant securitization (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 223)

This is strikingly circular reasoning, where premises and conclusions guarantee each other. ST starts, as we have seen, from the axioms that ‘normal politics’ tames violence, and that irrational securitizations threaten ‘normal politics’. Seeing Africa as a violent, anarchic space, lacking in ‘normal’ civilized politics, ST assumes this must be because securitization has run amok due to the absence of social contracts or Westphalian states. As a result, African ‘dominant securitization’ can be taken for granted, as a foil to the supposed peacefulness of Europe, and therefore as evidence that ‘normal politics’ tames violence, and so on.

ST here turns an antiblack narrative of African (a)history (Africa is primitive, violent, anachronistic) into an equally antiblack normative proposition: that Africa is culpable for failing to produce ‘normal politics’. European colonial violence is occluded, or worse, exonerated:

[M]any African elites publicly embraced a negative view of globalization, and took the view that their weak position in the global periphery was a major explanation for their difficulties. This led to a convenient rhetoric of ‘neo-colonial’ securitization that sought, often successfully, to divert attention from the indigenous causes of Africa’s difficulties (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 251)

This not only sanitizes the violence of colonialism and enslavement, it goes so far as to cast anti-colonial politics as the problem.

With Europe exonerated, Africa is then able to appear as a threat to *Europe*. We have already seen that ST seeks to protect Western ‘progress’ and normal politics from excessive securitization and a potential fall into primal anarchy. It is similarly concerned to defend normal politics outside the West but sees this as more hopeless: “In regions dominated by weak or failed states, real prospects exist that the local level will become dominant, with securitization forming microregions. To the list of microregions we should perhaps add the Hobbesian anarchies in some inner cities of megalopolises” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 70).

Later, this idea is expanded:

As argued by Robert Kaplan (1994), units other than states have created new lines of division... The booming megacities in the Third World, with their enormous slum suburbs, produce large populations that identify neither with their clans or tribes nor with states or nations... Large groups of people who focus on immediate material survival needs become nonidentity factors and might enter the sociopolitical realm as the joker at some later point when they suddenly do acquire or generate an identity (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 127)

Here, those who dwell in slums are figured as people without identities, or political subjectivities, not fully political, and perhaps not fully human. (Even cursory empirical investigation would prove this false: there are robust traditions of political activism in slums across the globe, including across the African continent.)

Because they exist in this state of nature (i.e. “focus on immediate material survival needs”) these racialized ‘jokers’ are potential threats to Europe, though in a way that is particularly tied to ST’s constructivist methodology: “Another effect of Kaplanesque anarchy, especially the disease-crime-population-migration circles in Africa, is the unofficial erection of Atlantic and Mediterranean walls by which North Americans and Europeans define a category of Africa and Africans as the major zone of anarchy, danger, and disease to be shut off from ‘our world’” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 127). This simultaneously asserts that ‘Africa’ is a space of “disease-crime-population-migration” – ‘Kaplanesque anarchy’ – and at the same time, warns against the securitization of ‘Africa and Africans’ in the West. What ST’s analysis of Africa produces, in this formulation, is nothing other than an updated ‘White man’s burden’: it is incumbent on the civilized not to turn away from the plight of the primitive, but the civilized must also take care to avoid being corrupted by their primitive anarchy. We can see here, finally, how little separates this contemporary school of political analysis from the openly antiblack racism of their Victorian predecessors.

Conclusion

This article has illustrated that classic ST is structured not only by Eurocentrism, but also civilizationism, methodological Whiteness, and antiblack racism. This is evident in its conception of politics, which it borrows from Arendt, and defines as a sphere of (White) civilized dialogue where reason triumphs over irrational securitizations. This perspective is only made possible by ignoring colonial history, ongoing (settler) colonial relations, and the racial violence of normal liberal politics. ST's racism is also evident in its methodology, which examines securitizing speech acts in order to defend this (European, civilized) 'normal politics'. Under cover of ostensibly neutral terms, ST normatively prioritizes the defense of order over justice, positioning the ST theorist as the defender of (White) civilized politics against (racialized) 'primal anarchy'. We have further demonstrated the role of antiblack thought in ST: its racist imaginaries of Africa serve as an indispensable foil setting up an integral contrast between normal politics versus securitization. One question beyond the scope of this article is whether this is similarly true of 'second generation' and more empirical applications of securitization theory, or indeed, the mere use of the word 'securitization.'

Postcolonial literature has long deliberated whether it is possible to re-work theories built on racist precepts. Are there "reparative possibilities" (Sedgwick 1997; in IR, see Rao 2017) for classic ST? Can it excise or surmount its racist foundations? Our analysis suggests that ST's racism is not an incidental or removable feature, nor 'merely' a matter of (empirical) *application*. Rather, it is baked into ST's conceptual apparatus, and in particular, its core concepts of politics and security. These problems cannot be remedied by applying classic ST to non-Western spaces (as typically suggested by critics of its Eurocentrism), or simply adding race or colonialism to its accounts. Furthermore, once classic ST is stripped of its racist conceptual and methodological apparatus, including its concepts of 'normal politics', its conservative deployment of speech act theory, its view of excessive securitization as threatening a racially encoded lower level of civilization, its faith in the social contract, and so on, there is very little left.

At best, what remains is simply the word 'securitization'. But even this word is potentially problematic, because inherent in it is a temporal move from some supposed pre- or non-security time, towards the (exceptional) violence of security. This is linked to White nostalgia for a better, more innocent time: a time which does not exist for those who have been subject to colonialism or the racial contract on scales from the local to the global, that is to say, the majority of the world's people. Perhaps the best hope for recuperating the term 'securitization' is to detach it from the methods of securitization theory and abandon the rigor of ST in favor of a looser use of the term. Such a recuperative intellectual project, if at all possible, has yet to be articulated.

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Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness and Antiblack thought in the Copenhagen Schoolⁱ

Securitization Theory (ST) has unquestionably made a significant impact. Its founding texts are amongst the most widely cited IR scholarship (cf. Wæver et al. 1993; Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998; Buzan and Wæver 2003), spawning active research programs and new ‘generations’ of ST. The concept of securitization has travelled to disciplines beyond IR, and even entered public discourse. What is so appealing about this theory? Perhaps the most tempting aspect of ST is its methodological rigor. It provides a clear set of steps and standards for identifying how referent objects (e.g. migration, health, cyber space) become security problems, and deciding whether they should indeed be ‘securitized’. This ready-made methodology can be applied to all sorts of empirical areas. However, students and scholars of security ought to resist this temptation of a ready-made approach and inquire more deeply into ST’s core theoretical assumptions and methodology.

This article argues that racist thought is fundamental and integral to classic ST’s conceptual and methodological project. While other scholarship has worked either to incorporate analysis of race into ST (Ibrahim 2005; Amin-Khan 2012; Mofette and Vadasaria 2016), or to overcome ST’s Eurocentrism (Wilkinson 2007; Bilgin 2010, 2011), this article offers something different. It is the first to excavate the foundations of ST in racist thought, and the results this has in the theory’s application. We demonstrate that classic ST is fundamentally and inextricably structured not only by Eurocentrism, but also civilizationism, methodological Whiteness, and antiblack racism.

What does it mean to excavate the racist foundations of a theory? That we use the ‘r-word’ and White supremacy as categories of analysis is sure to raise eyebrows. Even sympathetic readers might wonder if the problem we identify is more appropriately characterized as *Eurocentrism*. Critique of the Eurocentric character of much Western scholarship and cultural production has made significant inroads across academic disciplines, including IR (Hobson 2012; Sabaratnam 2013). Our analysis is inspired by this research and extends some of its insights. Yet there is more to be said. Black studies and decolonial scholarship demonstrate that much orthodox and critical Western social and political thought is predicated upon epistemological and ontological premises that are not simply Eurocentric but *racist*, specifically White supremacist. In IR, recent debates have addressed the question of whether postcolonial IR should proceed solely through an analytic of Eurocentrism or whether we need to more specifically address racism and White supremacy (Sajed 2016; Hozic 2016; Gruffydd Jones 2016; Rutazibwa 2016). Sajed suggests that the term ‘Eurocentric’ potentially neutralizes the foundational and continuing racism of the discipline (Sajed 2016, 168). Rutazibwa asks, “what existing power structure does this reluctance [to name racism] serve?” (Rutazibwa 2016, 192).

Echoing these concerns, we ask: What is at stake in the reluctance to name racism in analyses of international security? Racism is a fundamental system of power that has profoundly shaped the world for the past several hundred years. Moreover, as is now well established, IR emerged to provide intellectual support for the imperial and (settler) colonial ambitions of Western states (Vitalis 2000, 2015; Krishna 2001; Agathangelou and Ling

2004a). Drawing on Black Studies, Indigenous Studies and decolonial scholarship, we illustrate the racist modes of thought that underpin classic ST by deploying three concepts beyond Eurocentrism: civilizationism, methodological Whiteness, and antiblack racism.

The argument presented here is not a personal indictment of any particular author. Contrary to common sense notions that reduce racism to interpersonal prejudices of openly bigoted individuals, racism and White supremacy are *systems of power* (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Epistemic racism is intrinsic to Western knowledge structures, and not merely a failure of individual scholarship (Bhambra 2013; Grosfoguel 2003). Just as the ongoing racialized distribution of life chances across liberal societies is not simply the effect of intentionally racist individuals, racialized knowledge production is not simply the result of bad or flawed individual theorists. Colonial and racist assumptions about racial and civilizational difference animate the core political categories and theoretical frameworks of Western social and political thought. As we demonstrate, this is also true of classic ST.

We begin by acknowledging that discussions of racism or colonialism are not entirely absent in classic ST. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* briefly discusses the racial politics of US domestic societal security (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 130). In one of ST's original formulations, Wæver discusses neo-Nazi attacks on asylum seekers and racist justifications for the securitization of migration (Wæver 1995, 70; see also Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 42, 44–45). Colonialism is sometimes referenced (cf. Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 61, 63, 98, 129; Buzan and Wæver 2003, 14–18, 221), and White supremacy is mentioned as a potential “macrosecuritization” (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 263). Our argument is not that race is absent in ST, but that racist political thought is integral to it, even when (rarely) discussing race or colonialism.

The article proceeds in four sections. Section one reviews the ST framework and notable criticisms of it. Section two focuses on the conceptual apparatus of ST, showing how its conceptualization of ‘politics’ and ‘security’ is founded in civilizationist thought. Section three focuses on ST's methodology, highlighting its methodological Whiteness. Section four illustrates how antiblackness is a crucial building block in ST's conceptual division between security and politics. ST finds ‘primal anarchy’ especially in ‘Africa’, which it casts as irrationally over-securitized, making it a foil to ‘civilized politics’..

Throughout, we focus on classic articulations of ST associated with the Copenhagen School. Classic ST is very much an ongoing intellectual project that continues to be assertively defended by its founders (Buzan and Wæver 1997; Wæver 2011, 2015) and its basic precepts are in need of questioning in new ways. However, we are not unaware of divergences in ‘second generation’ and other iterations of ST. We therefore conclude with some thoughts about whether other versions of ST emulate or dispense with the racism of classic ST, and a discussion of whether the theory, or even just the word ‘securitization’, can be salvaged.

1. Securitization Theory and its Critics

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ST was forged in the post-Cold War period as a compromise between traditional (Neo-)Realist military security analysis and Aberystwyth School scholarship which advocated widening the definition of security. ST aims to recuperate Realism’s definition of security: survival in the face of an existential threat (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 1), whilst agreeing with the Aberystwyth School that security analysis should not focus solely on military state security.

Drawing on JL Austin’s speech act theory, ST proposes a social constructivist methodology. Securitization is defined as occurring not only when ‘security’ is uttered, but during any invocation of existential threat to a referent object (including, but not only, states). The securitizing actor must have some authority, but their audience must also accept, through consent or coercion (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 25), their claim. ST thus views securitizations as illocutionary and intersubjective.

ST centrally distinguishes between politics and security, or politicization and securitization. Through securitization an issue is intersubjectively deemed an existential threat. This justifies breaking ‘normal’ political rules (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 5), a potentially *dangerous* slip from the norm to the exception. Wæver further draws attention to the (presumptively desirable) possibility of desecuritization: de-escalation back to ‘normal politics’ (Wæver 1995; Aradau 2004). This is ST’s great strength: it provides a methodology for questioning how security threats are constructed, and how this might be reversed.

Several decades after its formulation, ST has many variants (cf. Balzacq 2011). These are too numerous to do justice to here. Instead, we focus on four key critiques of classic ST and demonstrate that they sometimes replicate, and at other times do not sufficiently challenge the racist political thought fundamental to ST’s concepts and methodology.

First, Feminist scholars of ST have questioned whether the theory can account for gender relations (Hansen 2000; Hoogensen and Rottem 2004; H. Hudson 2005; N. F. Hudson 2009; Heck and Schlag 2013; Kearns 2017). Much of this research is inspired by Hansen’s (2000) widely cited article, which argues that classic ST’s limitations regarding gender are methodological: speech act theory cannot account for the gendered power dynamics that underpin situations when speech is not possible. Hansen illustrates these methodological shortcomings through the fable of the Little Mermaid, wittily locating the analysis in Copenhagen, then abruptly travels to Pakistan for empirical evidence. There, Hansen finds “raped Muslim women” (Hansen 2000, 299) who are deemed to be ‘silent’. This Orientalist imaginary constructs a racial opposition: White Western women, who have achieved legitimacy as vocal political actors, versus ‘silent’ subaltern Pakistani ‘raped Muslim women’ (Abu-Lughod 2002; on ST see Bertrand 2018). This elides gendered insecurity in places like Denmark, where ‘gender equality’ is often figured in White supremacist discourses as a mark of civilization threatened, for instance, by Muslimified (Richter-Montpetit 2014, 45) immigrants. So, in core Feminist ST texts, we find that Eurocentric and racist thought is re-affirmed rather than challenged.

Second, ST’s Eurocentrism has been challenged by scholarship that asks whether applying ST to the non-West upends or modifies the theory (Wilkinson 2007; Bilgin 2010, 2011), a question echoed by some of ST’s

original proponents (cf. Greenwood and Wæver 2013). However, ST has never ignored the 'non-West'. As we will show, it draws heavily on racist accounts of spaces outside Europe that reify a stark division between 'West' and 'non-West' without examining colonial relationalities. Critics of ST's Eurocentrism assert that we cannot assume a (functioning, democratic) European state in non-West spaces, but ignore the (settler) colonial underpinnings of the state system and border cartographies. Seeing the issue solely as the analytical exclusion of the 'non-West,' they decry 'Eurocentrism' while retaining racist political thought. We adopt a more robust analysis (cf. Sabaratnam 2013) that views Eurocentrism as involving the ideas that: (1) 'Europe' or 'the West' is ontologically distinctive; (2) European development was endogenous; and (3) European cultural and political achievements were subsequently diffused across the world. Additionally, we deploy concepts beyond Eurocentrism (civilizationism, methodological Whiteness, and antiblack racism) to grapple with the role of racist political thought in ST.

Third, an emerging body of scholarship has moved significantly beyond a thin interpretation of Eurocentrism to inquire into how ST can better account for colonialism (Bertrand 2018) and racism (Ibrahim 2005; Amin-Khan 2012; Mofette and Vadasaria 2016). This work has highlighted how 'securitizations' are animated by racialized threat imaginaries (Ibrahim 2005; Mofette & Vadasaria 2016). At times work in this field acknowledges that ST relies on a norm/exception binary that risks minimizing the racial violence of normal (liberal) politics. However, the retention of ST's methodology means the focus remains on speech acts. This risks limiting our understanding of racism and colonialism to a matter merely of (racist) language. For example, in examining migration, the literature on race and securitization focuses primarily on politicians or other authoritative speakers framing migrants as security threats. What then tends to fall out of view is how the control of the movement of racialized people has been and continues to be constitutive of the 'normal' liberal order (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018). Even when a historical approach is taken, the focus is on historical instances of speech acts or the 'securitization' of migration, instead of, for example, the impacts of colonial drawing of borders or ongoing settler colonial occupation. Merely 'adding' race to securitization theory is insufficient to account for the raciality and coloniality of global politics. By instead excavating the fundamental racism of ST's concepts and methods, and its reliance on an eclectic canon of racist political thought, we can more fully explore the operations of racialization in security theory and practice.

Fourth, Foucauldian Security Studies (FSS) has offered convincing criticism of ST's reliance on a norm/exception distinction derived from the German philosopher, and "Crown Jurist of the Third Reich" (Frye 1966), Carl Schmitt (Huysmans 2008; Neal 2006; 2009). For ST, 'normal politics' is the norm, and security/securitizations are the exception, conceptually separating "security and the process of securitization from that which is merely political" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 5). FSS scholars criticize this formulation for eliding the everyday bureaucratic construction of security (Bigo 2002; McDonald 2008); limiting securitization to a singular threat-defense logic (Neal 2009); and only considering forms of politics found in the nation-state, despite claiming to challenge state-centrism (Huysmans 2006; Neal 2006).

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In the next section, we build on these critiques, but open a new line of inquiry, arguing that ST’s norm/exception distinction harnesses a racist, specifically civilizationist political imaginary, in which normal politics is the achievement of civilization, and ‘securitization’ threatens a potential backslide into barbarous ‘primal anarchy’. As a result, ST’s binary of normal politics versus exceptional security obscures the racial violence of ‘normal’ liberal politics.

2. Civilizationism in ST’s Conceptual Apparatus

In this section we describe how civilizationist thought underpins ST’s concepts of politics and security. Civilizationism is a term used to describe racist (theoretical) perspectives that contain three assumptions: 1. Civilizations can, and ought to, advance, and some (Western) civilizations are more ‘advanced’; 2. Civilizational progress is not only technological and material, but political and moral; 3. The ‘underdevelopment’ of certain civilizations represents a problem for, or threat to, developed ones. Drawing on a broad canon of civilizationist political philosophy, canonical ST texts develop a narrative of world-historical progress in which civilizational advancement beyond the violence of ‘primal anarchy’ involves curtailing securitization through the instantiation of civilized ‘normal politics’.

Classic ST frequently and favorably cites Samuel Huntington’s racist (Said 2001) clash of civilizations thesis (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 36, 53, 112, 125) and Robert Kaplan (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 47,54, 69–70, 112, 127; Buzan and Wæver 2003, 221, 252), infamous for his theory of “the coming anarchy”, his warnings of the danger of “tribalism”, his neo-Malthusian arguments about “overpopulation” in the Global South (Kaplan 1994, 2000) and his defense of “tempered imperialism” (Kaplan 2014). Social theorists such as Durkheim, who built his theory of society on racist anthropological distinctions between civilized men versus savages (Elias and Feagin 2016), also feature (Wæver 1995, 67).

Perhaps more fundamentally, ST draws on social contract thinkers such as Hobbes (cf. Wæver 1995, 54; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 69, 209) for their ‘state of nature’ concept (Wæver 2011, 121). Mills (1997) has convincingly argued that racism is integral, not incidental, to social contract theory¹, which typically casts the social contract as an achievement of Western civilization, and locates the contrasting ‘state of nature’ in African ‘tribes’ or Indigenous ‘savages’ (Mills 1997, 13). ST extends social contract theory to cast ‘normal politics’ (and the curbing of securitization) as an achievement of civilization. ‘Primal anarchy’ and the ‘state of nature’ act as the foils to this ‘normal politics’ in a teleological hierarchy of civilizational advancement from securitization towards politicization (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 53, 69).

Following Hobbes, ST locates this supposed progress in the West, particularly Europe:

¹ For a critique of the racial politics of Realist and Liberal uses of social contract theory, see (Sampson 2002; Henderson 2015).

It perhaps begins with the construction of the Hobbesian state in the eighteenth century. The creation of the Leviathan was aimed at opening a sphere of public economic and political life, and this could not be done without pushing the use of force back into a contained space controlled by the state. Under the Leviathan, citizens could not draw swords over economic grievances or political disagreements, which were to be handled by the rule of law and the market. The logic of existential threat and the right to use force... were reserved to the state and thus were largely *desecuritized* among the citizens (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 209, emphasis added)

The social contract, for ST, is an (18th century, White, European, liberal) feat of desecuritization, both within nation states and amongst them (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 51).² ST, then, does not merely replicate social contract theory and civilizationist thought. It develops it. By introducing a constructivist methodology, ST places politicization (the instantiation of 'normal politics' or social contracts) and *minimizing securitization* as integral to civilizational progress.

Admittedly ST is an eclectic theory. In addition to thinkers easily identified as civilizationist, it also draws on apparently more critical theorists, notably Arendt. Responding to Foucauldian critiques that describe ST's conceptualization of security as the exception to politics as Schmittian, Wæver argues that these critics have misunderstood: "...it is wrong to claim... that securitization theory involves a 'Schmittian' concept of politics – the theory has a Schmittian concept of security and an Arendtian concept of politics" (Wæver 2011, 470), further clarifying that:

The concept of *security* is Schmittian, because it defines security in terms of exception, emergency, and a decision (although not by a singular will, but among people in a political situation). This does not in itself make securitization theory's concept of *politics* Schmittian, because the place of security in the theory is as an anti-politics or the politically constituted limit to politics. This general politics is inspired by Hannah Arendt (Wæver 2011, 478)

Elsewhere, Wæver summarizes Arendt's concept of politics: "politics takes place among people, in-between us, because power only emerges when people act together, it basically consists of action directed to and dependent on the reaction of others, not doing things directly" (Wæver 2015, 122). Here, he adverts to Arendt's distinction between power (Macht) and violence (Gewalt), which ST mirrors by dividing politicization from securitization.

Arendt drew on racist German anthropology that distinguished between (uncivilized) "nature people" (Naturvölker) and (civilized) "cultured people" (Kulturvölker) (Klausen 2010; Owens 2017) to divide the world into communities with history, language and political institutions, and those without (Klausen 2010, 396). She cast the former as (morally and politically) superior and warned that the latter's 'primitivism' posed a threat to political freedom and democracy. When ST adopts Arendt's concept of politics, it does not dispense with her civilizationism, but replicates and develops it, conceptualizing 'normal politics' as the

² See Henderson's (2009) critique of this logic in Democratic Peace Theory.

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achievement of civilized people capable of resisting violence (securitization) through reasoned dialogue (politicization).

ST also replicates Arendt’s evacuation of violence from politics. Arendt built her idea of power (*Macht*) on an idealized vision of the Athenian *polis*, ignoring the ‘raw materials’ of ancient Athenian democracy – slave labor and women’s unpaid reproductive labor (James 2003, 249f). She similarly idealized the American republic (Gines 2014; James 2003; Johnson 2009; Owens 2017). Although in her famous ‘boomerang thesis’ Arendt (1979) located the origins of Nazism in European racism and colonialism, she asserted that the US had never been guilty of imperialism or Indigenous genocide (cf. James 2003; Johnson 2009). Though she spoke out against Nazi White supremacy in Europe, she insisted US racism was merely a *social* phenomenon, not a *political* structure (James 2003, 253; Johnson 2009) even though Nazi policies were explicitly inspired by US settler colonial genocide, the reservation system and Jim Crow segregation (Cesaire 1950; Fanon 1967; James 2003; Whitman 2017). In praising ancient Athens and contemporary America, Arendt actively minimized the imperial, racialized and gendered violence structuring these ‘civilized’ democracies (Norton 1995; Allen 2001; James 2003; Johnson 2009; Gines 2009; 2014).

ST similarly occludes the racial violence of normal (liberal) politics. This is not just a conceptual problem: it results in major empirical oversights. For example, though it contains the word ‘security’, ST places social security outside of its frame of analysis, as part of ‘normal politics’: “Although it shares some qualities with ‘social security,’ or security as applied to various civilian guard or police functions, international security has its own distinctive, more extreme meaning. Unlike social security, which has strong links to matters of entitlement and social justice, international security is more firmly rooted in the traditions of power politics” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 21). ST overlooks the power politics of social security, and cannot see how Western welfare state social security systems support White (settler) heteropatriarchal forms of life, such as the nuclear family (Cohen 1997; Duggan 2003; Kandaswamy 2008; Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013) and disproportionately target racialized, Indigenous, and poor communities for direct and violent interventions such as the removal of children from families through: enslavement, the residential schools that formed part of the genocide of Indigenous people, child welfare systems, migrant detention and removal, and so on. Closer to Copenhagen: Denmark now uses socialized daycare as a means for removing and assimilating Muslim children (Salem 2018). Social and national security are imbricated: for example, current Islamophobic counter-terrorism programs often use social and health services to identify suspected ‘terrorists’ (Kundnani 2014; Qureshi 2015; Qurashi 2018). Social security only entails ‘entitlement and social justice’ for those privileged by Whiteness, heterosexuality, citizenship and/or class status. ST’s civilizationist idealization of ‘normal politics’ occludes these dynamics.

More strikingly still, Copenhagen School theorists view policing as a positive force: “In the West, the police are normally an institutionalized part of society that ensures continuous functioning” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 54). They praise the pacification role of the modern state (Greenwood and Wæver 2013, 489) and ignore the long-standing use of police in defending class and racial inequality and (hetero)sexual

mores (James 2000; Kelley 2000; Davis 2003; Sexton 2007; Amar 2013; Browne 2015; Singh 2016), and violently occupying Indigenous land (Fanon 1963; Nettelbeck and Smandych 2010; Byrd 2011; Dhillon 2015; Razack 2015; Bell and Schreiner 2018). ST also repeatedly refers to the US War on Drugs as a “niche securitization” (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 327–31, 2009, 265). This minimizes the transnational history of antiblack violence perpetrated by the US state leading into the mass incarceration of Black and Latinx people (James 2000; Davis 2003; Rodriguez 2006) and ignores American covert and counterinsurgency action globally, especially in Latin America. Policing ensures ‘good’ order for those privileged by Whiteness, property ownership, gender norms and/or settler status. The constitutive role of policing and law in the racial, (settler) colonial, sexual and class violence of ‘normal politics’ is occluded as a direct result of ST’s reliance on civilizationist oppositions between politics versus security, and politicization versus securitization.

Classic ST is civilizationist in that it believes that there are more or less politically and morally developed civilizations. It identifies “normal politics” with (European) civilization and “securitization” with a return to (racialized) primal anarchy. As a result, it depicts ‘underdeveloped’ civilizations as threats to supposedly more advanced ones. This becomes especially clear when examining ST’s ideas about ‘state failure’. ST claims that in ‘developed’ states (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 28) a civilized political sphere generally fends off securitization, except when “securitization is unavoidable, as when states are faced with an implacable or barbarian aggressor” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 29). By contrast, in ‘failed’ or ‘weak’ states securitization runs amok: “In well-developed states, armed forces and intelligence services are carefully separated from normal political life, and their use is subject to elaborate procedures of authorization. Where such separation is not in place, as in many weak states... much of normal politics is pushed into the security realm” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 28). This excessive securitization, in turn, leads to primal (or ‘Hobbesian’ or ‘Kaplansque’) anarchy wherein the state “fails to take root or spirals into disintegration. This situation can lead to prolonged periods of *primal anarchy*, as is currently the case in Afghanistan and various parts of Africa, in which the state is only a shadow and reality is one of rival warlords and gangs” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 50, emphasis added; for analysis of the colonial preoccupation with Afghan ‘tribes’ see Manchanda 2018).

Discourses of state failure are “irredeemably rooted in an imperial and racialized imagination” (Gruffydd Jones 2014, 65; see also Grovogui 2001; Wai 2012a; Wai 2012b; Shilliam 2013). While they may avoid overt reference to race, they operate within a lineage of racial discourse which emerged to justify colonialism, and continuing trusteeship. This racial hierarchy is fully represented in ST’s list of weak and failing states: Nigeria under Abacha, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Liberia, and “various parts of Africa”, the USSR under Stalin, Bosnia, Colombia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and so on (cf. Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 28, 50, 69, 146). This is a racial discourse: ‘primal anarchy’ is primarily located in ‘brown’ (‘Afghanistan’) and ‘black’ (‘parts of Africa’) regions.

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Copenhagen School theorists sometimes seem to be aware of how this division falls. This does not lead them to question it. On the contrary, they warn against Western-centrism, but only in order to emphasize that it is in the West that ‘normal’ civilized politics exists: “if domestic and international were fixed, there would be a risk of generating a cozy Western view of politics: Domestic politics is normal and without security, whereas the extreme is relegated to the international space. In other parts of the world, domestic is not cozy” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 47, note 7). For ST, primal anarchy exists, not only in the international realm, but also in non-Western ‘other parts of the world’, where a failure of normal politics leads to “‘tribalist’ forms of association” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 69).

ST refuses to seriously consider the role of modern colonialism and ongoing imperial warfare in ‘failed states’. Such consideration might reveal the significance of Western colonial divide and rule policies, extraction of resources and labor, imposition of state borders, and military and covert intervention. Instead, ST frames ‘failed states’ as evidence of a primal state of nature.

Civilizationism is not just a collateral, detachable, part of ST’s imaginary, or a sadly unattended-to implication of its Kaplanesque view of anarchy or its Arendtian model of politics. The idea that there has been (White) civilizational progress away from (racialized) primal anarchy is omnipresent in ST because it is fundamental to ST’s opposition between politicization and securitization. Ungrounded in the racist and civilizationist narrative that ‘normal politics’ emerged from ‘primal anarchy’, this opposition would look as arbitrary as it in fact is.

3. Methodological and Normative Whiteness in Securitization Theory

We have established that ST is founded in a civilizationist conceptualization of politics and security which occludes racial and colonial violence. We now demonstrate that on the basis of these assumptions, ST develops a methodologically and normatively White theory.

As post-colonial, critical race and feminist scholarship argues, methodology involves making choices about whose perspectives or histories we (de)value. Bhabra (2017, np) defines methodological Whiteness as “a way of reflecting on the world that fails to acknowledge the role played by race in the very structuring of that world, and of the ways in which knowledge is constructed and legitimated within it. It fails to recognize the dominance of ‘Whiteness’ as anything other than the standard state of affairs and treats a limited perspective – that deriving from White experience – as a universal perspective”. Operating in supposedly neutral and universal terms, methodological Whiteness naturalizes the racial status quo, eliding the crucial role of racism in political systems or intellectual traditions. Bertrand (2018) has critiqued ST’s methodology for setting up a colonial relation wherein subalterns cannot speak, and securitization theorists speak for them. Our critique is somewhat different: we argue that since ST aspires to describe not just ‘what is’, but ‘what should be’, its methodological Whiteness also becomes normative Whiteness. To illustrate this

argument, we evaluate ST's incorporation of speech act theory, and ask how it interfaces with its civilizationist conceptualizations of politics and security.

ST bases its methodology in JL Austin's notion of illocutionary speech acts: forms of speech having some element of force, such as making a promise or giving a warning. Combining this with an Arendtian concept of politics seems intuitive: Arendt defined politics as action through communication, and Austin provides a method for analyzing communication as action. Notably, this methodology enacts a normative stance, being designed to "protect" Arendtian normal politics:

Securitization theory was built from the start on speech act theory, because it is an operational method that can be designed to protect politics in Arendt's sense. Put in short form, the political conception of securitization theory is *inspired by Arendt, implemented through speech act theory* (Wæver 2015, 122, emphasis in the original).

As we have seen, by defining violence as outside politics, Arendt failed to acknowledge that, by virtue of gender and racialization, some people are produced as the 'raw materials' of others' political freedom. When ST claims that the purpose of its method is to protect Arendtian 'normal politics', it implicitly undertakes to defend the status quo of a violent international racial order.

To begin, we can observe that ST does not challenge the ways in which structures of speech acts (like law, civil hierarchy, or international treaties) are and have been central to enforcing a colonial system of global inequality. On the contrary ST is structured, through its apparent neutrality, to supplement and reinforce those structures:

Our relative objectivism on social relations has the drawback of contributing to the reproduction of things as they are, of contributing to the taking for granted that CSS [Critical Security Studies] wants to upset. The advantage is—totally in line with classical security studies—to help in managing relations among units (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 206).

. While acknowledging this methodological and normative investment in maintaining the status quo as a 'drawback', the authors claim it is worth the price. 'Managing relations among units' – maintaining order – is a higher priority than justice.

And how is order to be maintained? By preventing civilized 'normal politics' from 'regressing' into a 'state of nature':

Austin gives us insights into the capacity of mankind [sic] for creating shared environments through language... Herein lies *the power of human civilization, as opposed to the 'state of nature'*; the power which alone makes it possible, on occasion, for someone weak and without weapons to be listened to and even obeyed, the power which makes it possible to conceive and pursue things such as social equality or solidarity and equal opportunities for genders, *all of which would not be conceivable in a 'state of nature' ethology*. To acknowledge in theory and investigate such power is at the same time to foster and defend it against the *regression into forms of social life based on brute force and coercion* (Wæver 2015, 121, emphasis added)

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Although this passage avoids overt mention of race, it mobilizes a racial imaginary. Its argument is that through the use of language to form social contracts, civilized people lift themselves above the savage ‘state of nature’ and create a public political sphere. This superiority is evidenced by the capacity for (Western, liberal) discourses like ‘equal opportunities for genders’ (here, ST echoes imperial feminism’s racist claim that gender equality is most advanced in the West and should be exported, especially to ‘Muslim’ societies).

However, while traditional Hobbesian social contract theory views the social contract in quasi-legal terms as happening once for all in the past, ST redefines it as continuously intersubjectively produced through speech acts, and therefore constantly in need of reproduction. For ST, White Western superiority is therefore precarious: it must be protected from (excessive) securitization which risks a ‘regression’ to a lower level of civilization or a fully uncivilized ‘state of nature’.

This passage does not merely retell a classic civilizationist narrative in newer philosophical language. *It operationalizes this narrative, making its assumptions into a method.* If the ability to do things with words and not force distinguishes civilized man, it argues, then to analyze ‘how to do things with words’ via Austin’s method must be *in itself* to step to the defense of civilized normal politics. ST offers a methodological procedure by which the scholar can observe that a speech act meets the criteria for ‘securitization’ and make normative statements about whether it should be heeded. For ST, when we deploy this methodology, we inherently proceed in a civilized manner and so contribute to and protect illocutionary, Arendtian politics.

The normative goal of ST is to protect ‘normal politics’ though civilized illocutionary action in favor of desecuritization, where desecuritization is constantly understood as synonymous with “progress attached to the development of Western international society”:

Progress as desecuritization [has been] inherent in the liberals’ project since the nineteenth century... This project has been taken the *furthest* in the “zone of peace” that now characterizes Western international society... With the demise of the Communist counterproject and the closed states and societies associated with it, the prospect exists for a more widespread dissolving of borders, desecuritizing most kinds of political, social, and economic interaction. This development is the *most advanced* within the EU, but it is also inherent in the shift from modern to postmodern states and from more closed to more open political constructions that is going on in many parts of the world (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 209, emphasis added)

To describe the 19th Century, golden age of European imperialism, as a period of Western liberal progress is to dramatically misapprehend the historical record (cf. Barkawi and Laffey 1999; Grovogui 2001; Krishna 2001). To equate the growth of Western imperialist hegemony with ‘desecuritization’ is even worse. It is to not only retroactively sanitize White supremacist imperialist history, but to further insist that it ought to continue. In this sort of normative claim, ST’s racism becomes operative, moving from a White methodology that describes the world from “a limited perspective – that deriving from White experience” (Bhambra 2017, np), to a normatively White prescription for how the world ought to be.

To illustrate the empirical consequences of this methodological and normative Whiteness, consider how ST refuses to distinguish between White nationalist and racial justice movements:

The radical white categorizations often line up with the attempts of the avowed progressives of the movements of minorities, multiculturalism, and political correctness to produce a general U.S. trend toward a redefinition of cultural and societal categories in terms of distinct racial and gender groups. The one side wants these groups recognized to ensure affirmative action in favor of the disfavored; the other side wants to use these categories to picture minorities as the threat to them and thereby to the whole... (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 130)

The above passage is not a mistake. Similar lines of thought are articulated elsewhere, for instance in relation to the threat of “radical feminism” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 54). ST frames racial justice and White nationalist movements as equivalent: both potentially securitize cultural and racial categories. This framing is a result of ST’s methodological Whiteness, its inability to ask questions about racialized, gendered and (settler) colonial orders, and its general preference for order over justice. It is also a normative stance. ST aims to use speech act theory to defend normal politics from (excessive) securitization, *including by racial justice movements*. Racial justice, by extension, becomes a danger, threatening regression into a (racially coded) lower level of civilization, or worse, primal anarchy.

To summarize: classic ST is fundamentally and avowedly conservative, seeking to excuse and reinforce a White liberal status quo. ST begins with a theory of ‘normal politics’ as reasoned, civilized dialogue and securitization as a potential regression into an uncivilized ‘state of nature’. It justifies this through a civilizationist history of the world that privileges Europe as the apex of civilization and ‘desecuritization’, ignoring Europe’s violent colonial projects. It then constructs a methodologically White theory that mostly avoids mentioning race even as it locates ‘progress’ towards normal politics and the limitation of securitization in Europe. This methodological Whiteness produces normative Whiteness: the theory does not merely describe desecuritization as European progress, it normatively asserts that becoming or remaining like Europe is a moral imperative. Through an analysis of classic ST’s representations of Africa the following section shows how these intellectual commitments issue in clear antiblack racism.

4. Antiblack Racism in ST writings on Africa

Antiblackness is a term describing the *specificity* of racism against people of African descent in the post-Columbus world. Chattel slavery turned people from the African continent into commodities to be traded and accumulated and thereby placed them “as the bottom marker” of “a projected universally human scale of being” (Wynter 2003, 308; cf. Fanon 1967; Hartman 1997; Spillers 1987). In this imaginary, Blackness and Black people figured as enslaveable *things*: the foil against which notions of what it means to be human (and thus a political subject) were invented. Antiblack racism is also complexly entangled with Western gender

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3 and sexual formations (Fanon 1967; Spillers 1987; Hartman 1997): Black women’s bodies and their alleged
4 sexual difference were cast as proof of African primitivism.³
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7 Significant here are questions of temporality. For Victorians, Africa was “a fetish-land, inhabited by
8 cannibals, dervishes and witch doctors, abandoned in prehistory” (McClintock 1995, 41). Tropes of ‘the Dark
9 Continent’ as “inhabiting not simply a different geographical space but a different temporal zone”
10 (McClintock 1995, 40) stubbornly persist, including in much IR theory, which casts Africa “as a metaphor for
11 a number of evils: failed states, AIDS, poverty, corruption...” (Grovoqui 2001, 426). Such representations of
12 Africa are not incidental in traditional IR theory. They are intrinsic to it. This is because ‘Africa’ serves as a
13 *foil* (Mills 1997, 13) to ‘Europe’ and ‘the West’, the ultimate counterpart to not just *Western* but *human*
14 development (Mudimbe 1988; Wai 2012a). In much IR scholarship Blackness continues to signify ultimate
15 (moral, sexual and political) primitivism, an inherent propensity to (sexual and political) violence, and sexual
16 excess and danger.
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22 Does ST overcome, replicate, or deepen antiblack thought on ‘Africa’? Certainly, ST sees a tendency towards
23 primal anarchy and the ‘state of nature’ in many non-Western parts of the world (the Balkans, Eastern
24 Europe, Central, South and East Asia, the Middle East and South America), but ‘Africa’ is particularly
25 maligned. Often, classic ST treats the entire continent as a single entity, a space where normal politics is
26 weak and oversecured, the state or social contract fails (or was never established) and ‘man’ reverts to
27 (or never left) the state of nature. “*Africa is a pessimist’s paradise, a place where the Hobbesian hypothesis*
28 *that in the absence of a political Leviathan life for individuals will be nasty, brutish, and short seems to be*
29 *widely manifest in everyday life*” (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 219).
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34 Elsewhere, however, it adds some complexity by seeing Africa in terms of multiple temporalities, being both
35 ‘premodern’, having elements of the ‘modern’, and threatening a ‘back to the future’ scenario. On the one
36 hand, a book like *Regions and Powers* (Buzan and Wæver 2003) offers a sweeping history of Europe over
37 millennia (containing little mention of colonialism), but a history of Africa that covers only official
38 decolonization and the post-Cold War era: a matter of mere decades. Completely missing is any historical
39 account of how colonialism and enslavement shaped not only African, but also European security relations
40 (Barkawi and Laffey 1999; Barkawi 2006; Krishna 2001; Agathangelou and Ling 2004b), and the idea of
41 Europe itself (Said 1979; Mudimbe 1988). Conversely, another canonical ST text asserts that: “In the
42 contemporary international system, some *prestate* referent objects are still active. The remnants of *tribal*
43 *barbarians still exist* in parts of Central Asia and Africa. Some hint of how these tribes *worked* as referent
44 objects for military security can be gleaned from contemporary civil wars in Afghanistan and Somalia”
45 (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 53, emphasis added). The past-tense “worked” here implies that we can
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53 ³ A notorious example is the treatment of Saartjie Baartman. For years, the Khoikhoi woman was paraded across Europe as
54 a freak show. Antiblack discourses surrounding the alleged pathologies of her body centered on the size of her buttocks and
55 genitalia (‘the Hottentot apron’) (McClintock 1995, 42).
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learn about pre-modern times (in Europe) by looking at present-day Afghanistan or Somalia, whose backwards ‘tribal barbarian’ populations constitute a *prestate* referent. These two temporalities come together in the statement that “In Africa, the main societal referent objects are a mix of premodern—the extended family, village, clan, and tribe—and modern, the ‘state-nation’” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 126).

ST, then, sees Africa as temporally anomalous – that is, both pre-modern and modern – because it manifests both a postcolonial present, and a potential degeneration to a precolonial/premodern past, as when Buzan and Wæver, drawing from other authors, including Kaplan, speculate that:

the period of colonization and decolonization might, in the long view, appear as something of an interlude, a period with its own distinctive characteristics, rather than a point of permanent transformation from premodern to modern. If back-to-the-future pessimism is right, then what we are looking at now is some phase in the terminal collapse of the Westphalian experiment in Africa (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 221)

This passage outlines a ‘back to the future’ scenario in which Africa returns to its default state of precolonial, tribal, anarchic statelessness. Here, as elsewhere, ST does not entirely ignore histories of colonization: it admits that colonialism had an impact on Africa, but understands this impact not as an extraction of resources and labor and a violent transformation of people into chattel, but as an ‘experiment’ aimed at bringing the European Westphalian state to ‘premodern’ barbarians (cf. Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 53, 126; Buzan and Wæver 2003, 221). Colonial and ongoing post-colonial and settler colonial exploitation does not feature in this analysis, and decolonization appears, not as a project of liberation, but as a potential backslide into primal anarchy (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 345). For ST, histories of colonialism look less like violent ongoing exploitation than a missed opportunity for Africa to become more modern, desecuritized, and European.

Why is ‘Africa’ missing this opportunity? ST’s methodological Whiteness leads it to assert, without substantiation, that the cause of this backsliding must be, not the ongoing extractive violence of liberal powers, but the failure of African people and states to ‘desecuritize’:

Because political violence has been such an endemic feature of the African landscape, and because the crisis of the African state is so central to the pervasive insecurity on the continent, we will take the existence of systematic political violence to indicate the presence of a dominant securitization (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 223)

This is strikingly circular reasoning, where premises and conclusions guarantee each other. ST starts, as we have seen, from the axioms that ‘normal politics’ tames violence, and that irrational securitizations threaten ‘normal politics’. Seeing Africa as a violent, anarchic space, lacking in ‘normal’ civilized politics, ST assumes this must be because securitization has run amok. As a result, African ‘dominant securitization’ can be taken for granted, as a foil to the supposed peacefulness of Europe, and therefore as evidence that ‘normal politics’ tames violence, and so on.

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ST here turns an antiblack narrative of African (a)history (Africa is primitive, violent, anachronistic) into an equally antiblack normative proposition: that Africa is culpable for failing to produce ‘normal politics’. European colonial violence is occluded, or worse, exonerated:

[M]any African elites publicly embraced a negative view of globalization, and took the view that their weak position in the global periphery was a major explanation for their difficulties. This led to a convenient rhetoric of ‘neo-colonial’ securitization that sought, often successfully, to divert attention from the indigenous causes of Africa’s difficulties (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 251)

This not only sanitizes the violence of colonialism and enslavement, it goes so far as to cast anti-colonial politics as the problem.⁴

With Europe exonerated, Africa is then able to appear as a threat to *Europe*. We have already seen that ST seeks to protect Western ‘progress’ and normal politics from excessive securitization and a potential fall into primal anarchy. It is similarly concerned to defend normal politics outside the West but sees this as more hopeless: “In regions dominated by weak or failed states, real prospects exist that the local level will become dominant, with securitization forming microregions. To the list of microregions we should perhaps add the Hobbesian anarchies in some inner cities of megalopolises” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 70).

Later, this idea is expanded:

As argued by Robert Kaplan (1994), units other than states have created new lines of division... The booming megacities in the Third World, with their enormous slum suburbs, produce large populations that identify neither with their clans or tribes nor with states or nations... Large groups of people who focus on immediate material survival needs become nonidentity factors and might enter the sociopolitical realm as the joker at some later point when they suddenly do acquire or generate an identity (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 127)

Here, those who dwell in slums are figured as people without identities, or political subjectivities, not fully political, and perhaps not fully human. (Even cursory empirical investigation would prove this false: there are robust traditions of political activism in slums across the globe, including across the African continent.)

Because they exist in this state of nature (i.e. “focus on immediate material survival needs”) these racialized ‘jokers’ are potential threats to Europe, though in a way that is particularly tied to ST’s constructivist methodology: “Another effect of Kaplanesque anarchy, especially the disease-crime-population-migration circles in Africa, is the unofficial erection of Atlantic and Mediterranean walls by which North Americans and Europeans define a category of Africa and Africans as the major zone of anarchy, danger, and disease to be shut off from ‘our world’” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 127). This simultaneously asserts that ‘Africa’ is a space of “Kaplanesque anarchy” and at the same time, warns against the securitization of ‘Africa and Africans’ in the West. What ST’s analysis of Africa produces, in this formulation, is nothing other than an updated ‘White man’s burden’: it is incumbent on the civilized not to turn away from the plight of the

⁴ For an example of a substantive critique of the appropriation of anti-colonial rhetoric in regressive political projects, see Fanon (1963) and his interlocutors.

primitive, but the civilized must also take care to avoid being corrupted by their primitive anarchy. We can see here, finally, how little separates this contemporary school of security analysis from the openly antiblack racism of their Victorian predecessors.

Conclusion

This article has illustrated that classic ST is structured not only by Eurocentrism, but also civilizationism, methodological Whiteness, and antiblack racism. This is evident in its conception of politics, which it borrows from Arendt, and defines as a sphere of (White) civilized dialogue where reason triumphs over irrational securitizations. This perspective is only made possible by ignoring colonial history, ongoing (settler) colonial relations, and the racial violence of normal liberal politics. ST's racism is also evident in its methodology, which examines securitizing speech acts in order to defend this (European, civilized) 'normal politics'. Under cover of ostensibly neutral terms, ST normatively prioritizes the defense of order over justice, positioning the ST theorist as the defender of (White) civilized politics against (racialized) 'primal anarchy'. We have further demonstrated the role of antiblack thought in ST: its racist imaginaries of Africa serve as an indispensable foil, setting up an contrast between normal politics versus securitization.

One question beyond the scope of this article is whether this is similarly true of 'second generation' and more empirical applications of securitization theory, or indeed, the mere use of the word 'securitization.' Postcolonial literature has long deliberated whether it is possible to re-work theories built on racist precepts. For example, vigorous debate has surrounded whether the works of Marx (Robinson 1983; Coulthard 2014; Rao 2017) or Foucault (Stoler 1995; Mbembe 2003; Thobani 2007) can be adapted and made to work for anti-racist/anti-colonial purposes. Are there "reparative possibilities" (Sedgwick 1997; in IR, see Rao 2017) for classic ST? Can it excise or surmount its racist foundations? Our analysis suggests that ST's racism is not an incidental feature, nor 'merely' a matter of (empirical) *application*. Rather, it is baked into ST's conceptual apparatus, and in particular, its core concepts of politics and security. These problems cannot be remedied by applying classic ST to non-Western spaces (as typically suggested by critics of its Eurocentrism), or simply adding race or colonialism to its accounts. The retention of ST's concepts and methods leads to a primary focus on instances of overtly racist speech acts. Global racism is then treated as a matter of mere language. This elides the constitutive role of racist and colonial relations of force and expropriation in the making of the modern order, including ongoing security projects (cf. Howell and Richter-Montpetit 2018).

Once classic ST is stripped of its racist conceptual and methodological apparatus, including its concepts of 'normal politics', its conservative deployment of speech act theory, its view of excessive securitization as threatening a racially encoded lower level of civilization, its faith in the social contract, and so on, there is very little left. Perhaps what remains is simply the word 'securitization'. But even this word is potentially problematic,

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because inherent in it is a temporal move from normal politics, towards the (exceptional) violence of security. Authors attempting to recuperate the term ‘securitization’ must take care not to indulge in White nostalgia for a better, more innocent time: a time which does not exist for those who have been subject to colonialism or the racial contract on scales from the local to the global, that is to say, the majority of the world’s people. Such a recuperative intellectual project, if at all possible, has yet to be articulated.

For Peer Review

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